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WATER DEPARTMENT
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Water Commission Minutes
Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Approved: 11/3/21

John O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm
Other member(s) present: Mat Morton
Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level
In attendance: Harold Simmons, Advisory Board

Reviewed & Signed:

- All Bills Outstanding Since Last Meeting
- All Payroll Outstanding Since Last Meeting

Well No. 1 Operational Update & Department Operations Update

Mr. O'Brien reported that there are still ongoing talks with bordering towns regarding possible services. He noted that one of them will be sending a delegation to discuss the matter further. Mr. Palaia has been involved in helping. Part of this is a sharing of ideas which could inspire the realization of efficiencies. One of the towns is looking to expand its department and potential services rendered by them could assist them in realizing that goal. Mr. Simmons inquired about what would happen if several years down the road the towns decide to end any shared services. Mr. O'Brien responded that his response to that concern is that if we are paying for part of an employee and that town decides they're not interested anymore, it would likely result in Dunstable pursuing restoration of an in house licensed operator. Mr. Simmons asked about the licensing of water operators and what goes into that. Mr. O'Brien elaborated on the process and how much goes into it. Hundreds of hours, various forms of training, etc. Mr. Morton noted there really isn't a Well No. 1 update. Mr. O'Brien tended to agree, but noted that one of the towns that looked at our system recently noted a potential leak. SWSS already had a solution for that. So there doesn't appear to be a problem, but there could be. So it'll be addressed if and should it become a problem. Mr. Simmons asked about what add on charges that SWSS charges for in addition to their monthly contract rate. Mr. O'Brien responded that there is a world of items that weren't anticipated and that's totaling something like \$40,000 a year above the minimum monthly contract rate. We had to pursue a private company for services given the state of our system at the time (2018). Now, post the project, things are much better. The more services we can potentially gain from other neighboring towns the more we may be able to save in relation to SWSS. Mr. Simmons asked about help from Highway Dept.

Mr. Morton noted that efforts to improve relations between Water Dept. and Highway Dept. remain ongoing. The work Mr. David Tully did recently on Lowell Street demonstrates the improvement in relations. He then turned to the ongoing efforts for the additional water pipe and main work to be done in addition to the Rt. 113 Infrastructure Project noting that Roads Commissioner Martin remains set on finding any funding he can for additional work to loop Hillcrest Street down Westford Street back to Main Street. This would be very helpful for the system overall. Mr. Voelker reminded that the Board of Selectmen remain committed to using some of the towns ARPA funding for this. The main issue there is the obliqueness of the federal government on whether the funds may be used for this purpose. Mr. Palaia is working with Town Counsel and relevant authorities to determine a path forward. In the meantime, State Representative Harrington at a recent meeting of the Board

of Selectmen committed to continuing to work on finding further funding for this additional work on the state level should it be necessary. State Senator Kennedy has made similar commitments. In the meantime the Rt. 113 Infrastructure Project remains on course.

Infrastructure Project Update

Mr. O'Brien noted there really isn't anything to report on this subject aside from the potential for a change in the shared cost between the ratepayers and the town for the servicing of the debt. But that isn't yet set to change and remains a larger conversation between the Commission, the Advisory Board, and the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Morton then turned to some gates that need to be installed in relation to the project. Neighbors to the area affected have requested that the work proceed. Mr. Simmons asked about the potential for one of the gates to be moved to 91 River Street. Mr. Voelker responded that the Board of Selectmen considered it but decided against doing so at this stage.

SWSS Update

Mr. O'Brien noted the last communication with SWSS was regarding the leak on Lowell Street. SWSS has confirmed the pH test on the water there confirms it's from the town system. David Tully has also confirmed that there's some kind of damage there. The Commission was in agreement that a fix must be pursued.

Next Meeting/Regular Meetings

The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for October 20, 2021. Mr. Voelker recommended that the Commission pursue this date as he would be away the subsequent week and unable to take minutes for the Commission. Due to conflicts the Commission determined on November 3, 2021.

Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll

The Commission considered and signed off on all of its outstanding bills. The Commission then reviewed and approved payment of the bills and also signed all outstanding department payroll. Mr. O'Brien then briefly reported on all bills he'd reviewed and approved since the last meeting in his capacity as chair. He noted these are the usual ones, utilities, SWSS, alarm, and the like.

Review of Water Account No. 1019 Spring Bill Adjustment for 533 Main Street

The Commission began by reviewing correspondence between Susan Bresnick, its Department Assistant, and the ratepayer. This included conveying a detailed description from Mr. O'Brien about the Commission's determination to adjust the bill after considering the request of the ratepayer. The ratepayer acknowledged the determination in their favor and promised to mail a check to Town Hall for payment of the reduced amount owed. This was August 2, 2021. As of the date of this meeting no such payment has been received by the ratepayer. Therefore \$1,280 remains due. Also waived when the bill was adjusted was a late fee in the sum of \$80.82. Mr. Voelker recommended to the Commission that this late fee be reinstated in light of the ratepayer having not paid even after receiving the adjustment requested. As we approach the fall billing the ratepayer will become further in arrears if they do not make a payment ahead of time. Should the bill remain late Mr. Voelker advised the Commission that it should seek all proper and lawful means of collection or inducement of payment. The Commission agreed and determined to re-impose the late fees previously waived. Further the Commission directed that Ms. Bresnick be instructed to send out the appropriate notices so that a Shut Off Notice may be pursued. The same as being done with 135 Pleasant.

A motion was made by Mr. Morton to re-impose the late fees totaling \$80.82. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

Minutes

The Commission considered the minutes from its meeting held on August 25, 2021. Seeing no reason to modify the minutes the Commission determined to accept the minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Morton to approve the minutes of August 25, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

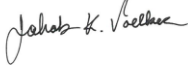
Additional Topics Discussed Not Noted on the Agenda

Past Due Bill for 135 Pleasant Street

Mr. Voelker reported that 135 Pleasant Street is past due on their bill. The sum owed is \$1,595.12. If they do not respond by October 4, 2021, the department will be forced to send a Shut Off Notice by Constable. This bill and 533 Main Streets bill constitute the largest amounts owed to the department. Otherwise most accounts are paid up with only a few carrying small balances as a result of partial payments. The Commission felt comfortable with waiting before taking any further action on this one. They still have time to respond. Further Mr. O'Brien felt it prudent to send another letter stressing that they can go on a payment plan or make a partial payment. He strongly recommended that any struggling ratepayers come forward as the department will always do its best to work with people.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morton at 6:37 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker
Administrative Assistant, Dunstable Water Department